

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims in this application as follows.

1(currently amended). A needle-guide device,~~particularly for a medical~~ultrasound probes,~~or the like~~, comprising a base body having means for connection to the probe and at least ~~one~~an elongated guide hole for receiving a needle~~an elongated, rodlike diagnostic or surgical tool~~, characterized in that said needle-guide device is made of at least two removably connectable parts, which are shaped in such a manner that each of them forms complementary and substantially symmetrical parts of the peripheral delimiting wall of said elongated guide hole for a needle, which peripheral wall parts complete each other when said ~~two~~complementary and substantially symmetrical parts of the needle-guide device are connected, thereby forming and maintaining said elongated guide hole for accurately guiding the needle with a 360 degree covering delimiting wall over substantially the entire length of said guide hole.

2(previously presented). A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the two parts of the needle-guide device have mutual abutment surfaces which are tangent or secant to the elongated guide hole for guiding the needle, whereas said elongated guide hole is obtained by a combination of grooves which are formed either integrally on one of the mutual abutment surfaces of one of the two parts of the needle-guide device or partly on one and partly on the other of the two abutment surfaces of both parts of the needle-guide device.

3(previously presented). A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the separation plane between the two parts of the needle-guide device is parallel to the axis of the elongated guide hole and secant or substantially tangent to the hole.

4(previously presented). A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that said elongated guide hole has a section which corresponds to the outer section of the needle,

with the wall of the elongated guide hole adhering to the whole needle surface.

5(currently amended). A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that said elongated guide hole has polygonal sections, ~~particularly square or rectangular sections, said square or rectangular sections~~ having such a size as to be able to inscribe therein the cylindrical or elliptical or oval section of the needle and generating needle-guiding surfaces tangent to the outer surface of the needle.

6(previously presented). A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the needle-guide device is composed of at least two removable parts, at least one base part and at least one second part, which two parts are separated from each other by a separation surface whose cross section is a broken rectangular curve, and forms a succession of alternate and parallel complementary engageable ribs, there being provided, in the opposite mutual abutment surfaces of the ribs of one or both of the two parts of the needle-guide device grooves having such a size and shape as to form together said elongated guide hole.

7(previously presented). A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 6, characterized in that the broken rectangular line-shaped separation surface between said two parts of the needle-guide has constant or variable widths to generate guiding holes aligned on one or more planes and with different relative positions.

8(currently amended). A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the needle-guide device may be divided in such a manner as to consist of more than two parts; ~~for instance three parts~~, shaped in such a manner as to form complementary parts of the peripheral delimiting wall of said elongated guide hole.

9(currently amended). A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that ~~it is composed of a~~ said base body ~~for connection to an ultrasound probe, which~~ has an abutment

or support surface for the second part of the needle-guide device, which second part has in turn at least one longitudinal groove whose size corresponds to the needle size, and forms the side walls and a wall transverse thereto for delimiting the needle-guiding hole, whereas its support surface on the base of the needle-guide device forms the missing wall of the elongated guide hole, when the two parts of the needle-guide device are connected.

10(previously presented). A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 2, characterized in that the two mutual abutment surfaces of the two parts of the needle-guide device have each a groove whose width corresponds to the width of the needle and a partial depth relative to the corresponding dimension of the needle, the two grooves being coincident and completing mutually when the two parts of the needle-guide device are connected, thereby forming the elongated guide hole for guiding the needle.

11(previously presented). A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 6, characterized in that the base part of the needle-guide device has at least a longitudinal groove in the surface abutting against the second removable part of the needle-guide device, for engagement of longitudinally continuous or discontinuous extensions of the side walls of a longitudinal groove formed in said second removable part of the needle-guide device, thereby forming the bottom of the longitudinal groove of the base, the missing completing wall of the elongated guide hole, whose additional delimiting walls are formed by the bottom of the longitudinal groove in said second part of the needle-guide device, the side walls of said groove and the extensions of said side walls of the groove in said second part of the needle-guide device.

12(currently amended). A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 11, characterized in that, ~~alternatively, instead of two extensions of the side walls of the longitudinal grooves in the second part of the needle-guide device, the~~ said second part of the needle-guide device has~~may~~

~~be arranged to have~~ a single extension of one of ~~said~~the two side walls of the longitudinal groove, ~~a second~~whereas the other extension ~~being~~may be provided on ~~said~~the base part, as an extension of the opposite side wall of the longitudinal groove in the base part of the needle-guide device, whereby each of the two parts of the needle-guide device forms two of the opposite walls of the elongated guide hole.

13(previously presented). A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 11, characterized in that the arrangement of the extensions of the side walls of the grooves in the two parts of the needle-guide device is alternate and complementary over the length of the two extensions in the longitudinal direction of the grooves, either on one side and along the two opposite sides.

14(previously presented). A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that it has means for centering and partially interlocking the two parts of the needle-guide device.

15(previously presented). A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the two parts of the needle-guide device have removable mutually locking means.

16(previously presented). A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 15, characterized in that the two parts of the needle-guide device have mutually clamping screw threaded means.

17(previously presented). A needle-guide device as claimed in claim 16, characterized in that the mutually clamping screw threaded means of the two parts of the needle-guide device have means for engaging said two parts of the needle-guide device in an non-separable condition, and in a incompletely clamped condition.

18-36(withdrawn).

37(currently amended). A combination of a needle-guide device having a base and an ultrasound probe comprising a body and a scan head, characterized in that the base of the needle-guide device is removably attachable to the probe body in a stable and predetermined position,

said base having one or more shape mating extensions which ~~corresponds~~adhere to a portion of the outer surface of the ultrasound probe body to form~~and/or~~ mutual interlock engagement means, ~~as well as clamping means~~.

38(currently amended). A combination as claimed in claim 37, characterized in that the needle-guide device is made of a plurality of~~at least two~~ removably connectable parts, which are shaped in such a manner that each of them forms complementary parts of the peripheral delimiting wall of said elongated guide hole for a needle, which peripheral wall parts complete each other when said plurality of~~two~~ parts of the needle-guide device are connected, thereby forming said elongated guide hole for guiding the needle with a 360 degree covering delimiting wall.

39(previously presented). A combination as claimed in claim 37, characterized in that the needle-guide device has a tapered front head and the probe is an endocavitary probe, which typically has a substantially cylindrical or other similar shape, also being elongated and having a rounded head, the base of the needle-guide device having a surface whereby it rests on the probe body only in a few partial portions of the longitudinal extension and particularly in the end portions of the base of the needle-guide device.

40(previously presented). A combination as claimed in claim 37, characterized in that the facing surfaces of the base of the needle-guide device and of the probe body have complementary centering projections and recesses arranged over their length.

41(previously presented). A combination as claimed in claim 37, characterized in that the probe body may have recesses for accommodating supporting feet or extensions of the base of the needle-guide device, provided at least at the ends thereof.

42(previously presented). A combination as claimed in claim 41, characterized in that the

tapered front head of the needle-guide device has an engagement extension on the side turned toward the probe case, which is designed to engage in a recess of the probe body, in such a manner that the tapered end of said front head is connected thereto without substantially forming steps or discontinuities external the surface of the probe body.

43(previously presented). A combination as claimed in claim 37, characterized in that the engagement means between the front head of the needle-guide device and the probe form means for holding the needle-guide device base in position, whereas the needle-guide device is removably secured to the probe by means of a clamping collar provided at the rear end portion of the needle-guide device.

44(previously presented). A combination as claimed in claim 37, characterized in that it includes an external ultrasound probe having a bulged shape and a wider head as compared with the handgrip, wherein the probe head has its greatest circumference in an intermediate position between the front end and the portion connected to the handgrip, whereas the needle-guide device has a base having two preferably symmetrically coincident extensions before the greatest circumference of the probe head, and an extension with a fastening screw which overlaps a rear side of the widened head against which the fastening screw is tightened.

45(previously presented). A combination as claimed in claim 37, having at least one elongated guide hole arranged to have such an inclination with respect to the central axis of the cone of view of said ultrasound probe such that at least one needle passing through said guide hole falls within the probe imaging region upon scanning, and whereas any other needles passing through guide holes have predetermined and fixed positions relative to the said at least one needle.

46-96(withdrawn).

Respectfully submitted,

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